

1937-38.

NEW ZEALAND.

THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS.

REPORT OF THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE DOMINION OF NEW ZEALAND ON THE EIGHTEENTH
ASSEMBLY OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS, HELD AT GENEVA IN THE YEAR 1937

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

EIGHTEENTH ASSEMBLY OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS.

New Zealand Government Offices,

SIR,—

415 Strand, London, W.C. 2, 25th October, 1937.

I have the honour to submit to you this, my report on the Eighteenth Assembly of the League of Nations, which opened in Geneva on Monday, the 13th September, 1937. The first and second meetings, which were held on the morning and afternoon of that day, were of a formal nature. There was a short speech by M. Juan Negrin, the Spanish Prime Minister, on whom, as President of the Council, then in session, devolved the duty of opening the proceedings. He made a passing reference to the unhappy state of his own country, dealt briefly with the difficult international situation, and, at the same time, paid tribute to the usefulness of the League, citing particularly the settlement of the Alexandretta question, and expressed admiration at the willingness of a great power to submit its case on Palestine to the Permanent Mandates Commission.

Before recording the preliminary steps and the appointment of officers, which are a necessary prelude in a session of the Assembly, I would say a few words about the conditions under which the Assembly met. The civil war in Spain had recently culminated in a direct threat not only to certain States whose shores are washed by the Mediterranean Sea, but to nations regularly using that sea as a highway. Although belligerent rights had not been accorded to the two sides, merchant ships of neutral countries were being searched and attacked by submarines whose nationality it was difficult to establish, and, indeed, there had arisen a state of piracy which the British and French Governments were determined to stamp out. Some days before the opening of the Assembly, the Mediterranean powers, including Italy, and also Germany and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, had been invited to a conference at Nyon, a short distance from Geneva, to consider the steps to be taken to deal with the outrages. Both Italy and Germany declined to attend, but the other powers met, and after deliberations lasting two days there emerged an agreement acceptable to the States represented. This is not the place to deal with the agreement, as it had no direct connection with the Assembly, but it deserves passing reference.

The Spanish question, involving the activities of another Mediterranean power, had already come more than once before the Council, and it had again been raised in a more acute form by a further appeal by the Spanish Government to the League.

On the afternoon of the 13th September delegates were notified of an appeal which had been received from the Chinese Government under Articles 10, 11, and 17 of the Covenant in connection with Japanese aggression.